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research up to the point where the beautiful harmony in the appearance of objects is destroyed, appears to him an offensive impiety, a misconception of the bounds which nature has set for man. He disliked people that wore spectacles because it seemed improper to see more than nature had intended; he disliked to think about thought and despised transcendental analysis, considering it far better to confine ourselves to phenomena and to the unmistakable tasks set before us, and to limit knowledge to that which nature voluntarily offers us, without being violently forced to give up her secrets. At the root of these opinions lies the conviction that the position and importance of a reasoning being are subject to certain inevitable limitations which require no proof from a demonstration of principles or consequences. In itself the transgression of these limits is immoral and reprehensible. The eternal obscurity of the Noumena of Kant's conception is analogous to Goethe's "Mystery of Nature," into which it is improper to penetrate even if it were possible to do so. For the former, the prohibition of that which lies beyond tangible existence is a logical obstacle, for the latter an ethical one.

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DISCUSSIONS.

THE NATURE OF ETHICAL SCIENCE.

HAVING had occasion recently to write an introductory sketch of the science of Ethics, I have been led to give some attention to the consideration of the scope and method of that science; and as the view which I have adopted seems to disagree with that of several other writers with whom in the main I am strongly in sympathy, I have thought that it might be desirable to insert a few words here on the reasons that have led me to differ from these authorities. The chief point of disagreement is with regard to the question whether Ethics is to be regarded as a positive or as a normative science—*i.e.*, whether it simply sets itself to study the facts and conditions of human conduct, or endeavors, in addition to this, to define an ideal, from which principles or laws of action may be

derived. The latter view is the one which I have adopted ; and I confess I am somewhat surprised to find what a considerable number of those who are otherwise in harmony with my general point of view are opposed to this position. In order to give definiteness to the discussion, it may be well to indicate my position in relation to the most emphatic utterance that I have been able to find on the side opposed to my own. This utterance occurs in Mr. F. H. Bradley's "Ethical Studies," pp. 174-5.

"We first remark," says Mr. Bradley, "and with some confidence, that there can not be a moral philosophy which will tell us what in particular we are to do, and also that it is not the business of philosophy to do so." If the emphasis here is to be laid on the words "in particular," I have no disagreement with Mr. Bradley on this point. It seems clear that philosophy can only discuss the broad principles of conduct ; how particular actions are to be brought under these principles, is a question that must be left to individual tact and insight, assisted by the *axiomata media* accumulated throughout the course of human history, and by what we may call the common sense of the community to which the individual belongs.

So far there is no difference of opinion. But Mr. Bradley goes on : "All philosophy has to do is 'to understand what is ;' and moral philosophy has to understand morals which exist, not to make them or give directions for making them. Such a notion is simply ludicrous." What is ludicrous, I suppose, is the notion that philosophy is, as it were, to *invent* principles of conduct of which men were previously unaware, and which had not previously been operative in men's moral lives. This, I admit, would be somewhat ludicrous. The moral ideal can hardly be supposed to be something external to the human consciousness, which an acute man may discover, as he might discover a new star, or which a skilful man may invent, as he might invent a flying-machine. Whatever our moral ideal may be, it must surely be involved in our nature as self-conscious beings. And being so involved, it can hardly have failed to influence the history of human conduct, and even to come to some extent into clear consciousness in human reflection. It would be a little ludicrous even for a doctor to suppose that he had discovered some principle of health which had been entirely inoperative in men's lives, and which he sought now to introduce for the first time ; and if this is on the whole absurd even with reference to the health of the human body, it may be

granted that it would be still more so with reference to the health of the human spirit, which belongs much more intimately to our self-conscious nature. In morals, as in medicine, the general rules of action under ordinary circumstances may be assumed to be largely known, and to be almost instinctively put into practice. But this does not prevent the science of health from being a practical or normative science; nor need it prevent the science of morals from being of a similar character.

"Philosophy in general," Mr. Bradley proceeds, "has not to anticipate the discoveries of the particular sciences nor the evolution of history." Certainly not; but is not this rather a different point? What particular science is there which makes discoveries in morals, and whose discoveries philosophy is not to anticipate? If there were such a science, it would, I suppose, be what J. S. Mill described as "Ethology." But however true the results of such a science might be, they would merely be truths with reference to the facts of human action, whereas Ethics is concerned with the *standard of judgment* which is applied to human action. Ethology would not be Ethics any more than a diagnosis is a prescription. There is, in truth, *no* particular science of Ethics. There is only moral philosophy on the one hand and the moral consciousness on the other. "The philosophy of religion," Mr. Bradley goes on, "has not to make a new religion or teach an old one, but simply to understand the religious consciousness." The philosophy of religion, I should answer, has not only to *understand* the religious consciousness, but also to *judge* it. It has to consider how far the religious consciousness is to be regarded as superstition, and how far it may be held to contain an "Ahnung" of truth. In this sense, the philosophy of religion may be said to criticise and reconstruct the religious consciousness, though it might, no doubt, be an exaggeration to say that it was "to make a new religion." "Æsthetic has not to produce works of fine art, [Of course not! It is *human beings* who produce works of fine art. This is not even the business of an *art*, much less of a science,] but to theorize the beautiful which it finds." And by theorizing, I should add, to supply principles of criticism and suggestions of improvement. "Political philosophy has not to play tricks with the State, but to understand it." And, by understanding, to help to reconstruct it. It has to understand the State, in the sense in which Plato understood the State. But Plato's understanding of the State led at once to an effort to transform it. "And Ethics has not to make

the world moral [!], but to reduce to theory the morality current in the world." But in reducing it to theory, I should add, you are already on the way to modify it. The man who acts from principle may seem for a time to be acting in the same way as the man who acts simply in accordance with traditional rules; and to a certain extent, no doubt, the conduct of the two may coincide. But it may safely be assumed that the coincidence will not extend far. The man who understands the principle on which a rule or tradition rests, will understand, also, when the rule should be broken or the tradition set aside.

"In short," Mr. Bradley sums up, "the view which thinks moral philosophy is to supply us with particular moral prescriptions confuses science with art, and confuses, besides, reflective with intuitive judgment. That which tells us what in particular is right and wrong is not reflection, but intuition." This last remark seems to me to contain a rather dangerous doctrine. The man who acts habitually from intuitive perception of what is right and wrong rather than from reflective consideration of what is reasonable, is surely not a man to be trusted in cases of difficulty; though on ordinary occasions he may perhaps be more reliable than the man who sophisticates his conscience by too much deliberation. On the whole, however, if the emphasis is to be laid on "particular," I am substantially in agreement with Mr. Bradley's summing up. I do not consider that any theory of morals can be expected to instruct us with regard to our particular moral duties. Even a theory of health could hardly descend to every minute detail of diet and exercise; and a science of morals is concerned with conditions that are indefinitely more complex. But surely in the one case, as in the other, the ideal can be defined, and the broad principles by which it is to be attained can be clearly determined. In so far as Ethics does this, it appears to me that it may fairly be characterized as a normative science. In so far as it does not do this, we may call it Ethology, or Social Science, or the Psychology of Ethics, or the Metaphysic of Ethics, but surely it is not Ethics proper. The science of Ethics is related to Psychology and Metaphysics in very much the same way as the science of Medicine is related to Physiology; it is related to Ethology or Social Science in very much the same way as the science of Medicine is related to Pathology. And it seems to me to be of great importance not to confound Ethics with any of those other sciences, however closely it may be related to them.

I hope I have succeeded in making my point of view sufficiently clear. I should be glad if any of those who disagree with it would explain exactly the nature of their objections.

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"MORAL DISTINCTIONS."

IN a note under the above title in the *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS*, Vol. III. No. 3, Mr. Neville Tebbutt accuses me of neglecting certain obvious moral distinctions:

1. I ignore the distinction between theft, lying, dishonesty, on the one hand, and the failure to live up to the highest ideal or to give up my leisure and comforts to relieve a poor neighbor, on the other.

2. I ignore the distinction between self-regard and other-regarding conduct, between prudence and morality.

Mr. Tebbutt himself apparently would divide life into three parts. First, there is the field of self-regarding acts which have no moral quality. They "concern myself," and are, in a sense, below morality. Next there is the sphere of moral obligation, with which you "may require me to do my duty,"—*e.g.*, to be honest and truthful. Above this is the field of merit, where I may "please myself how I act." I am praised, perhaps, if I live up to my first ideal, but "I am not bound to," and am not blamed if I do not.

In support of these contentions, Mr. Tebbutt appeals to the "ordinary sensible man of affairs," who is not troubled with theological or supernatural scruples,—he might have added with scruples of any kind.

To take the second of these accusations first. If Mr. Tebbutt had turned to page 186 of my "*Elements of Ethics*," he would have seen that I admit the distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding acts. I may do so, however, as a convenient mode of classification. On page 181 I give my reasons for this limitation. How important it is to recognize them, and so avoid the fallacy of pressing a logical distinction into the service of an immoral theory of life is illustrated by Mr. Tebbutt's confusion. It is true that insobriety (to take Mr. Tebbutt's instance) may be said to injure myself primarily and others only secondarily. But it requires little reflection to perceive that this is only a superficial distinction. That it is so may be shown by asking where does the "self" end